United Nations

Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General meets with President and Vice-President of Kenya in Nairobi as African visit continues; warns of danger of marginalization of continent.

+ General Assembly elects 18 States to fill vacancies on 54-member Economic and Social Council; members will serve three-year terms beginning 1 January 1994.

+ Report by Independent Advisory Group on United Nations Financing says international community should be ready to accept higher peace-keeping costs as more crises loom; States should consider meeting costs from national defence budgets.

+ United Nations resumes humanitarian assistance operations throughout Angola; flights carry food to Cuito and Huambo; 100 foreign nationals to be flown out of Cuito tomorrow.

+ Cherif Bassiouni, an Egyptian national, appointed Chairman of Commission of Experts on war crimes committed in former Yugoslavia; Christine Cleiren of Netherlands and Hanne Greve of Norway appointed members.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, continuing his African visit in Kenya, had meetings today with Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi and Vice-President George Saitoti, during which the problems of the continent were reviewed, according to a United Nations spokesman. President Moi stated that he was looking forward to the resolution of the conflict in Somalia and was in touch with the parties there.

The Secretary-General and President Moi discussed how the international community could help Kenya cope with 400,000 refugees and with security problems along its 100-mile border with Somalia. The Secretary-General expressed his appreciation for Kenya's assistance to the two United Nations programmes headquartered in Nairobi -- the United Nations Environment

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Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT). As President of the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), Mr. Moi also reviewed the role of the "Group of Four" -- Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and Kenya -- with regard to Southern Sudan.

At a luncheon given by Vice-President Saitoti, the Secretary-General said that the marginalization of Africa was his greatest fear and constant concern. The international community felt itself overwhelmed by the world's problems in the wake of the cold war, and was now in retreat politically and economically. There was "donor fatigue" and a declining enthusiasm for development aid to the continent. Africa had an image problem, he continued, and Africans must show greater political determination to solve their problems. That message had been heard in Mozambique, resulting in an agreement yesterday between the Government and the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO), and must find a responsive chord elsewhere in the region, he concluded.

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The General Assembly today elected 18 States to fill vacancies on the Economic and Social Council. The elections followed the geographical distribution of the seats being vacated: five from the African States (Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania and Zimbabwe); three from the Asian States (Indonesia, Japan and Pakistan); one from the Eastern European States (Bulgaria); four from the Latin American and Caribbean States (Chile, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Venezuela); and five from the Western European and Other States (France, Germany, Greece and Ireland). They will serve three-year terms beginning 1 January 1994.

The Council's 54 members are elected according to the following pattern: 14 from Africa; 11 from Asia; 10 from Latin America and the Caribbean; 13 from Western Europe and Other States, and six from Eastern Europe. The elections are held by secret ballot, there are no nominations, and members are elected by a two-thirds majority.

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With signs of crises looming in many parts of the world, the international community should be ready to accept significantly higher peace-keeping costs in the next few years, according to a report by the Independent Advisory Group on United Nations Financing entitled "Financing an Effective United Nations". The report, which was transmitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly in a note dated 11 October, said that because peace-keeping was an investment in security, Governments should consider financing it from their national defence budgets. Furthermore, the Organization should consider having a unified peace-keeping budget, financed by a single annual assessment.

The report highlighted the contrast between the demands on the United Nations and the smallness and precariousness of its financial base, and stressed that all Member States must pay assessed dues on time and in full.

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Members with past arrears, particularly the large contributors, should pay them as quickly as possible. Dues should be paid in four quarterly instalments, instead of in a lump sum at the start of the year. The Organization should have authority to charge interest on late payments, to be deposited in the Working Capital Fund. In addition, the level of the Fund should be raised from $100 million to $200 million, with the difference financed by a one-time assessment. The report also recommended that the regular budget assessment rate should be based on a three- rather than a ten-year average of Member States' gross domestic products (GDP), and that the United Nations should not be allowed to borrow.

A more effective and properly financed United Nations was urgently needed as it was the only framework for building the institutions of a global society, the report concluded.

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With the resumption yesterday of humanitarian assistance operations throughout Angola, the United Nations system has been able to resume its relief flights, according to a United Nations spokesman.

Today a flight carrying 11 tons of food products left Luanda for the city of Cuito, for distribution to populations both in areas controlled by the Government and those controlled by the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The spokesman said that a flight was scheduled for tomorrow to pick up some 100 foreign nationals there. A second relief flight to Huambo was also scheduled for today. The first flight to Huambo went in yesterday with 12 tons of food and medicines, and the distribution reportedly took place without incident.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today announced the appointment of Cherif Bassiouni as the new Chairman of the Commission of Experts established to examine possible war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia. Mr. Bassiouni, an Egyptian national, succeeds Frits Kalshoven of the Netherlands, who resigned for health reasons. He has been a member of the Commission since its inception and is a Professor of Law and President of the International Association of Penal Law.

Two new members were also appointed to the Commission: Christine Cleiren of the Netherlands, a Professor of Criminal Law at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam, and Hanne Greve of Norway, a Judge at the High Court of Gulating (Court of Appeals of Western Norway).

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